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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 NDJAMENA 000102

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/C AND AF/SPG
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [AU](#) [AL](#) [CH](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: CHAD STILL FEARS REBELS DESPITE DISUNITY; QATAR
MEDIATES CHAD-SUDAN; AND GOC SEEKS SAUDI EMBASSY RETURN

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Classified By: AMB Louis J. Nigro, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Chad's FORMIN warned Ambassador and DCM 3/23 that the GOC saw strong signs that Khartoum was getting ready to launch its Chad rebel clients based in Darfur across the border into Chad yet again. Moussa Faki Mahamat could not predict when or even if the rebels would actually attack, but emphasized that Chad was prepared to respond "to even one cartridge fired across the border." Faki said he doubted that GOS re-supply and reorganization reflected GOS plans use the Chad rebels to reinforce SAF, militias or janjaweed inside Darfur. He stressed that the GOC could not afford to assume that the Chad rebels would not muster the ability to attack this dry season, despite no significant rebel offensive activity thus far. He acknowledged that continued deep divisions among the rebels could limit their potential to do damage to Chad, charging that FSR rebel leader Soubiane had not joined the new rebel UFR "coalition" and was being kept by the GOS in Khartoum to prevent him from negotiating a deal with the GOC. Even if some rebels balked at attacking Chad, Faki said, "Bashir can always find some 'adventurers' who will want to fight." Faki also acknowledged that the rebels presumably knew that the GOC military was much better armed and equipped this year than last year. "Still," he said, "I do not exclude anything as a possibility from the rebels."

¶2. (C) Faki said the GOC was trying at every level to work constructively with Sudan, bilaterally, and in the Dakar and Doha accord processes. Faki described to us a Qatari offer to mediate between Chad and Sudan. The GOC had agreed to send a negotiating team to Doha to meet with a Sudanese delegation, probably in April, with Faki heading the GOC team, despite fears that Tripoli and Cairo might object. Ambassador briefed Faki on new USG appointments to African affairs leadership positions. Faki responded that that Chad was counting on the U.S. playing an important role in African affairs; that it respected the nominations of AMB Carson and MG Gratton; and that it was heartened by Secretary Clinton's recent remarks on Sudan. Finally, Faki asked for U.S.

assistance in attempting to convince Saudi Arabia to restaff its Embassy in Ndjamena, empty since the wife and child of the Ambassador were killed in the 2008 rebel attack.

13. (C) Although no one can predict what the rebels will do except their own feuding chiefs, we do not see rebel attacks in strength as imminent: the rebels are divided and Chad much stronger militarily than last year, while the Dakar Contact Group, the Libyans, and now apparently the Qataris, have focused international attention on the Chad-Sudan proxy-war face-off and the GOC has strengthened its own political position by opening its government to senior opposition figures. We think that the intensification of the crisis in Sudan argues for more U.S. attention on the Chad piece of the Darfur conundrum. We are formulating an action plan for focusing USG efforts here in ways that will redound to the success of U.S. policy in Sudan. END SUMMARY.

Chadian Rebels Preparing
An Offensive?

14. (C) Chadian FM Moussa Faki Mahamat warned Ambassador and DCM March 23 that the GOC was seeing strong signs that Khartoum was getting ready to move onto the offensive against Chad by launching its Chad rebel clients based in Darfur across the border into Chad, as it had so many times in the past. Faki said that the Sudanese had been reorganizing, retraining, and resupplying Chadian rebel groups and positioning them to attack Chad in the near future. The Chadian rebels had recently received over 100 GoS-provided SUVs, fully fueled and equipped with heavy weapons. The rebels were positioned at Douji and Karlonga, 50 kilometers from the Chadian border at Modeina. Two Sudanese generals,

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Ahmet Ibrahim and Greshaoui (phonetic), were providing military advice to the rebels. Faki said that he could not predict whether the rebels would actually carry out attacks, but "it would be regrettable" if they did, as Chad was prepared to respond "even to one cartridge fired across the border."

Bashir's Strategy of Subterfuge

15. (C) Faki said the Sudan's President Bashir seemed to believe that Chad rebel attacks on Chad might serve as "diversionary tactics" to create a climate of general regional disorder and thus draw international and domestic attention away from his own recent indictment on war crimes charges by the ICC, and the human rights circumstances that had given rise to it. Thus Bashir was providing significant additional military resources to Chadian rebels operating from within Sudan. The GoC, however, was "ready for even a single cartridge" fired across the border or within Chadian territory, said Faki. Bashir's strategy of subterfuge to deal with his legal predicament, including rhetorical excesses designed to pander alternatively to his own people, to the Arab world, to Africans, and to Russia and China in the UNSC, was a risky one, asserted Faki, as it might inadvertently lead to conflict with Chad. Bashir knew that he could not hope for a solution to the ICC indictment "in the abstract," since all countries concerned were fragile ones, with limited commitment to or understanding of human rights standards. Thus a series of false issues -- pan-Arabism, neo-colonialism, African unity, American-Israeli conspiracies -- were invoked to keep the international community from focusing on the real problem, which was the likelihood of renewed refugee flows from Darfur into Chad, just as MINURCAT had begun its work.

GOC ANALYZES REBELS

16. (C) Faki said he doubted that GOS re-supply and reorganization was evidence of Sudan intention to use the Chadian rebels to reinforce SAF, GOS-sponsored militias or janjaweed against Khartoum's enemies in Darfur, rather than against Chad. Faki pointed out that Bashir's aim was to keep attention away from problems within Sudan. Faki also said that the GOC did not -- indeed could not -- take the optimistic view that Chad rebels had little or no motivation to attack this dry season, despite how far the season had advanced with no significant rebel offensive activity thus far. Faki acknowledged that continued deep divisions among the rebels could limit their ability to do damage to Chad. He cited the case of FSR leader Ahmad Soubiane, whose group had not joined the new UFR "coalition" announced in January and who was being kept by the GOS in Khartoum. The GOC was in contact with him, and believed he was ready to negotiate a deal with the Deby regime, but the GOS was holding him in Sudan, where they could watch him. "Khartoum does not allow him freedom of movement, because it fears he will defect to Chad if allowed to travel to neutral territory," Faki charged. "Even if some rebels balked at attacking Chad, 'Bashir can always find some 'adventurers' who will want to fight.'" Faki also acknowledged that the rebels knew that the GOC military was much better armed and equipped than last year. "Still," he said, "I do not exclude anything as a possibility from the rebels," said Faki. "We are taking all signs of movement very seriously. They are capable of doing things that do not serve even their own long-term interests." Fighting in Chad might be a goal in itself for the Chadian rebels, contended Faki, but it was merely a tactic for Bashir.

USG's EMERGING
AFRICA POLICY TEAM

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17. (C) Ambassador briefed Faki on new USG appointments to African affairs leadership positions, including those of A/S of State for African Affairs and Special Envoy for Sudan. Faki said that Chad was counting on the U.S. playing an important role in African affairs; expressed pleasure at the nominations of AMB Carson and MG Gration; and added that the GoC had been heartened by Secretary Clinton's recent remarks on the situation in Sudan. Faki reported that in a recent appearance before the National Assembly on the EUFOR-MINURCAT transfer of authority, he had been asked repeatedly about what the policy of the new U.S. administration might bring to bear to the region, and what the U.S. might contribute to MINURCAT -- in addition to our assessed UN dues. Ambassador assured Faki that as we worked out the elements of our regional strategy, we would keep Chad's equities in mind.

GOC WANTS THE U.S.
TO SAY INVOLVED

18. (C) Faki said that the GOC wanted the USG not to lose sight of Chad's role in the region, even as Sudan, Bashir, and the ICC indictment garnered headlines. Faki repeated Chad's sincere desire for peace and amity with Sudan and laid all the blame on Sudan for poor relations and continued tensions. The GOC was working seriously at every level to build constructive relations with Sudan. On the bilateral level, Chad's ambassador was in Khartoum, but Sudan's ambassador was in Khartoum as well, instead of where he belonged, in Ndjamena. The GOC had supported the Doha process concretely, helping JEM leaders from Sudan get to Ndjamena for talks with Chief Mediator Bassole and for onward travel

to Doha. The Chadian ambassador to Riyadh was in Doha to observe the talks. The GOC was trying its best to implement the Dakar Accord, had hosted the last Contact Group meeting in November, and was awaiting a GOS invitation for the next scheduled Contact Group meeting, set for Khartoum in April.

QATAR'S CHAD-SUDAN
PEACE INITIATIVE

¶9. (C) Faki described to us an offer of the Government of Qatar to mediate between Chad and Sudan, even as the Qataris continued to try to broker peace between the GoS and its rebels. The Emir of Qatar had been in Ndjamena earlier in March to brief Deby on the Doha process with the GOS and Sudan rebels. The Emir had taken that opportunity to offer Qatar's good offices to reduce tensions and normalize Ndjamena-Khartoum relations. Deby had pointed out that there had been at least three Afro-Arab mediation efforts recently, each followed by a written accord (Tripoli in 2006, Riyadh in 2007, and Dakar in 2008). The problem was not that a framework for normalization was lacking, it was that Sudan had consistently gone back on its word to comply with the various accords. Sudan claimed that it would only cease support for Chadian rebels once Chad ceased support for Sudan rebels. In reality, Chad was not helping the Sudan rebels in any way that resembled Sudan's support for the Chadian rebels. Faki said that there were "no JEM fighters on Chadian soil." Deby had agreed nevertheless to the Qatari offer to help and would send a negotiating team to Doha to meet with a Sudanese delegation some time after the two "summits" that Qatar was hosting this month had concluded.

GOING TO DOHA?

¶10. (C) Faki said that he would head the Chad team, which would also include Abdel Karim Azzar, the FORMIN's military advisor General Brahim, and Hashim Djiret. The Qataris told the GOC that the Sudanese delegation would be headed by Sudanese Cooperation Minister Dr. Tidjani, and would also include Muctar al-Siddick, and two military advisors. "We are awaiting a date from Qatar," added Faki, "perhaps in

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April." Faki said that the GOC was aware that this Qatari initiative might offend Libya and Egypt, and be seen as complicating the Dakar Process. But the GOC was willing to give this additional avenue a try: "We will go to Doha and see what Sudan is prepared to offer." The Qataris said that they had apprised Tripoli and Cairo of the initiative, which was enough for Chad, although Chad was aware that Tripoli, along with Cairo, remained suspicious that the Qatari leadership might not be up to the challenge, particularly given the JEM's recent assertion that it might not come to another Doha round. Faki opined that maybe the Doha initiative would help the Dakar Contact Group find the financing it needed to implement its own plan to put an observer presence along the Chad-Sudan border, which Chad supports and Libya approves.

MORE REFUGEES
FROM DARFUR?

¶11. (C) Faki noted that Chad was bracing for a possible new influx of refugees from Darfur, if infrastructure there broke down following the expulsion of the NGO community. Faki pointed out that Chad's capacities, notably including water and medical services, were already severely strained. Still, Chad was in discussion with MINURCAT on contingency planning, in the event that the Khartoum Government's actions started to turn Darfur IDPs into refugees in Chad in

significant numbers.

SAUDI EMBASSY
IN CHAD

¶12. (C) Faki asked for U.S. assistance in attempting to convince Saudi Arabia to reopen its Embassy in Ndjamena. He recalled that the Saudis had withdrawn their diplomatic personnel from Chad a year ago, after the wife and child of the Ambassador were killed in the rebel attacks. Faki said that the GOC had made repeated demarches to the GOSA for the return of their ambassador to Chad. The Chadian Ambassador was in Riyadh. The GOC had tried to reassure Riyadh on security in Chad, compiling a detailed police report at Saudi request. Lack of a functioning Saudi Embassy in Chad imposed major burdens on Chad's Muslim population, because Hadj travelers had to send passports to Tripoli or Yaounde for visas. Chad's large population on the Saudi peninsula was also having trouble finding an interlocutor on consular affairs. And it was embarrassing to Chad to not have the Saudis present. Faki said that the GOC feared that Sudan was pressuring Riyadh to stay out of Chad, "with its line about Arab unity."

COMMENT

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NIGRO